

Am I a part of nature? Or is it a part of me? This is the desperate question asked by the eyes that peer out at me from this collection of animals. The artist has bestially, phallically inserted himself into these creatures and now looks back out at us waiting for the answer. But what we can't tell is whether those eyes are trapped in their new environment or hiding playfully as if behind Halloween masks. How much of man's pathos is natural to all things and how much of it does he project onto those things? Is the artist looking for himself in the animal? Or is he looking for the animal within himself?

The eyes we see seem to plead with us for some understanding, yet we cannot distinguish our feeling for the animal from our feeling for the human eyes into which we gaze. Our fascination with this must surely come from our desire to recognize ourselves within nature. Each of us must find reason for ourselves in the world. We each must strive to understand what things we all share. Perhaps if we were to isolate the things that we share both with animals and with all of each other, we would somehow discover what is normal and what is acceptable to all. If we could agree on what it is about all of us that cannot be helped, our newfound mutual understanding of the nature we share might amount to some accord about how we should all proceed.

The man's eyes beg us to look into them and reassure them that they are normal, natural elements of the organic world and not somehow tainted beyond reprieve by the cynicism of the strictly human experience. They implore us to accept them as subjects without blame or responsibility. They ask us how the human mind can at once be both purely animal and yet totally disenfranchised from any connection to the animal kingdom. They force us to consider the distance between the reality of things and our perception of them. And finally (in spite of a darker awareness), they allow us all to admit that each one of us still longs childishly to be looked into and reassured that we cannot help what we are, that we are all ok, that everything is as it must be and that none of it is our fault.

Jason Stoneking Dec. 2009